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Country note**

Guatemala

Summary

The Executive Director presents the country note for Guatemala for a programme of cooperation for the period 2002-2006.

The situation of women and children

1. The Peace Accords signed in December 1996 ended 35 years of civil war. They provide a comprehensive framework for the reform of Guatemalan society in order to ensure a sustainable peace. Children and adolescents are a strategic group in reaching this goal: 56 per cent of the 11 million inhabitants are under 18, and more than 75 per cent live in poverty. Guatemala is a multi-ethnic society, where 22 ethnic groups, 42 per cent of them Maya, inhabit a territory of 108,888 square kilometres.

2. Children and adolescents were profoundly affected by the violence of the armed conflict. The Historical Clarification (Truth Commission) Report documented the disappearance and murder of 200,000 people, including 40,000 children. A large number of children were orphaned or abandoned, in particular among the Mayas, and saw their families destroyed, along with the possibility of living a normal childhood within their culture. Throughout the armed conflict, members of civil

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** An addendum to the present report containing the final country programme recommendation will be submitted to the Executive Board for approval at its second regular session of 2001.

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society were persecuted, including youth leaders, which further destroyed the social fabric and deprived Guatemala of the next generation of leaders for social change.

3. Children, adolescents and women still suffer from the legacy of war. The Common Country Assessment (CCA) defined exclusion and inequity as Guatemala's main problems and identified as root causes a weak democratic state of law, cultural discrimination against women and indigenous people, and an inequitable distribution of economic resources.

4. The socio-economic roots of the conflict were widespread poverty and extreme income disparities, problems which have yet to be addressed. Guatemala is a relatively rich country, with a per capita gross national product (GNP) of $1,660 (1999), yet the wealthiest 10 per cent of the population receive 46.6 per cent of GNP, while the poorest 10 per cent receive only 0.6 per cent. Land distribution shows similar inequality, and there has been inadequate coverage and poor quality of basic services. Nonetheless, the Government has moved to comply with Peace Accord commitments to increase social sector expenditures, which rose from 2.3 per cent of GNP in 1994 to almost 5 per cent in 1998. These expenditures represent about 34.8 per cent of the current budget, but institutional capacity to deliver services remains weak.

5. Social investments since 1990 have brought some results. The under-five mortality rate (U5MR) was reduced from 102 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 59 per 1,000 in 1999; vitamin A deficiency is under control; and an educational reform process has been launched. However, the heritage of poverty, violence and poor services has hindered the fulfilment of children's rights to survival and development. Guatemala has among the region's worst social indicators. HIV/AIDS has yet to be recognized as a serious threat by the society, and cases are greatly underreported. About one third of Guatemalan children are malnourished. As many as 16 per cent of school-age boys and 21 per cent of school-age girls never enrol; 22 per cent of those who do enter primary school drop out before grade three; and less than 10 per cent of indigenous children have access to bilingual education. The proportion of children benefiting from early stimulation and education is so small that no statistics exist. Child labour is widespread; more than 400,000 girls age 7 to 14 do not go to school because they have to work at home. The maternal mortality rate (MMR) is among the highest in Latin America (190 per 100,000 live births); and in provinces with a mainly indigenous population, the infant mortality rate and MMR are far higher than national averages.

6. Not only are indigenous children, women and girls victims of discrimination, they are also the most affected by hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and floods, in a country that, like the rest of Central America, has the world's highest risk of natural disasters.

7. The physical and mental integrity and dignity of children are threatened by corporal punishment, neglect, sexual abuse and domestic and street violence. Firearms and knives are the main causes of adolescent deaths. Psychosocial problems due to direct or indirect exposure to wartime and current violence affect many. This violence and stress, as well as unrelenting poverty, male emigration and increased rural-to-urban migration, also contribute to increased family disintegration.

8. Laws and regulations covering children and adolescents are incompatible with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified in 1990, and with other relevant conventions and protocols. In fact, the judicial system is too weak to ensure punishment for crimes against children. The possibilities for children and adolescents to exercise their rights, express an opinion, participate in society, become informed, and organized are very limited: for example, only 27 per cent of children 9 to 18 consider themselves well informed about HIV/AIDS; half of them do not know the meaning of child rights and democracy.

Lessons learned from past cooperation

9. The 1997-2001 country programme was formulated shortly before the Peace Accords were signed. It did not fully capture their spirit, nor adequately relate children's rights to the process of post-war transition. Despite this, it did realize significant achievements. The key effort was development of a new Code for Children and Youth, consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Although resistance from small but powerful interest groups prevented this groundbreaking law from coming into force, children's rights have become a critical part of the political and public agenda, and have gained the support of the principal religious groups.

10. A 1999 mid-term review produced five lessons: (a) the country programme must be firmly aligned with the Peace Process to ensure sustainable rights protection; (b) Guatemala needs a broad effort to provide education and training on rights and democracy in order to assist in building a culture of respect for human rights; (c) more bridges must be built between the Government and civil society to reach consensus on public policies for children and women; (d) pilot projects for service delivery at the municipal level should be supported only if they serve as the basis of national policy formulation; and (e) civil society organizations must be empowered so they can negotiate, defend and monitor public policies that assure the rights of children and women.

Proposed country programme strategy

11. The UNICEF country programme for 2002-2006 contributes to the process of reconciliation, strengthening of democracy, and development of a sustainable peace in a post-conflict country, through the fulfilment of children's and women's rights. The programme supports a long-term vision whose two main axes are: the creation of a culture of respect for human rights; and the practical implementation of those rights so that all Guatemalan families satisfy their basic needs, live in dignity and are protected from rights violations. The programme will support the Government and society to implement the Peace Accords, the recommendations of the Truth Commission, the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights on the Child, and the obligations Guatemala has accepted in various international conventions.

12. Four country programme objectives will be pursued to tackle the root causes of exclusion and inequity: (a) development of public policies consistent with the rights of children and women; (b) an increase in coverage of state and non-state services to fulfil economic and social rights, and protect civil and political rights, especially of the most disadvantaged groups; (c) empowerment of civil society to build networks

and capacity to defend rights; and (d) development of a model of integrated municipal interventions in departments where social indicators are among the country's worst.

13. Strategies to reach these objectives address the demand by society for adequate basic services, a culture respecting rights, and the capacity of the State and its partners to respond to these demands. The major strategies are: (a) promoting knowledge and respect for the rights of children and women, targeting, in particular, teachers, women, children and adolescents; (b) fostering policy dialogue and action through alliance-building among government, civil society, international organizations and agencies; (c) advocacy for the reform and implementation of rights-based legislation; (d) strengthening the technical capacity, managerial abilities and social mobilization skills of state bodies, civil society organizations and community groups; (e) monitoring rights fulfilment and rights issues of women and children; and (f) evaluating and disseminating pilot experiences in building child-friendly municipalities. Integrated into all efforts, as cross-cutting themes, will be the rights of indigenous people, gender and disaster preparedness.

14. The new country programme is the result of extensive consultations with the Government, donors, United Nations agencies and some 80 civil society organizations (NGOs, churches, the private sector, universities and youth organizations). This coalition is the basis for Guatemala's active participation in the New Global Agenda for Children. The country programme responds to the problems identified in the Common Country Assessment and is fully integrated into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

15. UNICEF assistance to social development and to the creation of a culture of human rights in Guatemala will take the form of three programmes. The *social policy and community development programme* will support development of public policies consistent with the Peace Accords and based on state and civil society consensus to improve income distribution and guarantee the fulfilment of social and economic rights. Other key objectives will be promotion of a model for providing drinking water supply and sanitation services in rural communities, health sector reform, nutrition, mental health services, and HIV/AIDS prevention and management activities. The programme contains three projects: social policy; health and nutrition; and water supply and sanitation.

16. The *state of law and citizen participation programme* will strengthen all processes that enhance the capacity of civil society to understand, implement and defend the rights of children and women within a context of tolerance and reconciliation. It will support a legal system consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant international treaties. Particular emphasis will be placed on the formation of, and leadership training for, women's groups and adolescent and youth associations. The programme consists of two projects: legal reform, judicial reform and protection; and citizen participation.

17. The *education and communication programme* recognizes the important instruments needed to build a society which respects human rights and is democratic, peaceful and multi-ethnic. This programme will support educational reform and non-formal education, with a particular focus on early childhood education, primary bilingual education, intra-family relations and education for adolescents in historical memory, peace and democracy. Networks of social communicators at all levels will be supported around such issues as children's

rights, women's rights, multi-culturality, child abuse and neglect, child labour and the right to education. The programme includes two projects: education and communication.

18. Cross-sectoral costs will provide technical assistance across the integrated programme, as well as operational support crucial to programme delivery.

Estimated programme budget

Estimated programme cooperation, 2002-2006*

(In thousands of United States dollars)

	Regular resources	Other resources	Total
Social policy and community development	1 738	8 622	10 360
State of law and citizen participation	678	7 087	7 765
Education and communication	857	6 908	7 765
Cross-sectoral costs	1 366	3 133	4 499
Total	**4 639**	**25 750**	**30 389**

* These are indicative figures only which are subject to change once aggregate financial data are finalized.

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Country note**

Haiti

Summary

The Executive Director presents the country note for Haiti for a programme of cooperation for the period 2002 to 2006.

The situation of children and women

1. The Common Country Assessment characterized the situation in Haiti as one of extreme violence, absence of justice, limited access to social services, environmental degradation, unemployment, rural migration, housing shortages and overcrowding. The 1991 coup d'Etat was followed by violence, an embargo, military intervention, and the continuing absence of political stability and good governance, which together have caused a breakdown in the social structure and created conditions that impede the realization of child rights at every stage of the life cycle. The parliamentary elections in 2000 brought discord and uncertainty, and a denunciation of electoral flaws by key donors. The donor position hinders programme development and anti-poverty efforts in a country where 70 per cent of the population of 8 million (33 per cent urban, 67 per cent rural) live on less than $1 per day. As much as 66 per cent of the country's resources are owned by 4 per cent of the population, while 70 per cent of the populace receive only 20 per cent of income. Development aid contributes to a very large percentage of government expenditure. With a per capita gross national product of $460, Haiti remains the

* E/ICEF/2001/2.

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poorest country in Latin America and the Caribbean. Presidential elections are scheduled to be held by the end of November 2000.

2. The rights of Haitian children and women are largely unfulfilled. The maternal mortality rate is 457 per 100,000 live births (1995); the infant mortality rate has remained at 80 per 1,000 live births for the past five years; and the under-five mortality rate is 119 per 1,000 live births. Severe and moderate malnutrition affect 32 per cent of children under the age of 5. Diarrhoea and respiratory infections are the main causes of child mortality. Locally produced salt is not iodized, and vitamin A deficiency persists. Vaccination coverage of children is between 43 and 71 per cent. Although no cases of measles had been reported since 1996, there was an epidemic in 2000. Lack of access to information and to health services, combined with a shortage of staff and essential drugs, worsen the health situation.

3. The number of HIV-positive children under the age of 5 is estimated at 20,000. As many as 55 per cent of all orphans — some 235,000 children — are AIDS orphans. In 1999, HIV prevalence among 15- 24-year-olds was estimated at 3.9 per cent and at 5.4-7.7 per cent among 15- 49-year-olds (among the highest in the region). Two thirds of women 15 to 24 do not believe that they are at risk of infection. Increasing coverage of drinking water supply and sanitation services is another major challenge. Only 46 per cent of the population (49 per cent urban and 44.5 per cent rural), have access to safe drinking water, while sanitation services are limited to 26 per cent of the population.

4. Among primary school children, only 43 per cent are enrolled. In 1999, net primary enrolment was 42.8 per cent for girls and 41 per cent for boys; 62 per cent of pupils are over-age. Retention until the fifth year is 40.8 per cent, and secondary school enrolment is just 12.7 per cent for girls and 15 per cent for boys. Adult literacy rates are 46 per cent for women and 50 per cent for men. In 2000, 25 per cent of pre-school-age children were registered in early childhood care and pre-school institutions.

5. There are 7,500 street children, separated from their families by poverty, loss of parents or domestic violence. An estimated 250,000 children, 75 per cent of whom are young girls, work as unpaid servants. These children are sent from their rural homes to the capital in the hope of obtaining education, but end up in servitude and suffer neglect and abuse. Forty per cent of all Haitian children have endured repeated acts of violence — ranging from humiliation and beating to rape and incest. Children under the age of 16, some under 13, are illegally held in prison, often in the same cell as adults; those over 16 are imprisoned with adults. Children affected by natural disasters, such as frequent hurricanes, fall into the group of children requiring special protection.

6. There are few operational national policies, strategic and legal frameworks, or functioning institutions. Decision-making is rarely informed by the best interests of the child. The right of children to express their views is not respected. Those in government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), communities and families responsible for fulfilling rights are debilitated by lack of knowledge, motivation and resources. The leadership is distracted by political events, the private sector is not sufficiently engaged in social issues, and neither public nor private accountability mechanisms function well. Despite intense stress from poverty, disease and other factors, families remain an important social safety net, yet ignorance about rights prevents them from fulfilling their obligations.

Lessons learned from past cooperation

7. During the 1994-2001 period, UNICEF responded to the chronic political instability with three short-duration country programmes, which gave the organization the flexibility needed to respond to the rapidly changing environment. But the negative effect of such programming is now being seen, in the absence of long-term vision and development objectives, lack of systematic mid-term reviews and programme evaluations, and delayed implementation. It is necessary to recommit to the five-year cycle and to integrate emergency programming in the new country programme.

8. The short-duration programmes never fully resolved the problem of fundamental institutional weaknesses. Relationships with the Government and NGOs have been erratic, reflecting the shifting positions of the international community vis-à-vis the Government. Focusing resources on state institutions and then on civil society resulted in limited long-term impact on the fulfilment of children's and women's rights. Programmatic equilibrium must be created by strengthening partnerships with the Government and civil society, and by building bridges between them.

9. A number of other lessons were learned. First, the needs-based approach generated a wide range of interventions resulting in a dispersion of resources and energy; a rights-based approach, on the other hand, will unify interventions within a well-defined framework. Second, capacity-building, clearly linked to advocacy, information and communication, must be strengthened, not only at the national level but also at the level of district, community and family. Third, the participation of children and adolescents, not a priority in the past, is an essential component of the country programme. A culture of participation that will allow children to express their views in the family, school and community and articulate their demand for their rights should be created. Fourth, there is a need to strengthen accountability of those under obligation to protect the rights of children (duty bearers). This requires consolidated monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms and the establishment of a solid and disaggregated child rights database.

10. Analysis of the situation of high-risk groups, their numbers now swelled by AIDS orphans, shows that protection must qualify as a programme in its own right, despite the crosscutting nature of many protection-related activities. Previous programmes of cooperation seriously underestimated the magnitude of HIV/AIDS, and UNICEF must work with United Nations and other partners in breaking the conspiracy of silence and accelerating action.

Proposed country programme strategy

11. Haitian children and adolescents have experienced an intensity and wide range of human rights violations, and they are increasingly vulnerable. As a result, the new country programme is based on UNICEF comparative advantages and the priorities of the New Global Agenda for Children. It will adopt a rights-based and decentralized approach, focusing on the right to life, development and protection, prioritizing key activities in the areas of health and nutrition, basic education and protection. These key strategic interventions fall within the parameters currently being defined in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. The

proposed country programme strategy will support national policies and priorities for children, defined by the new Government and consistent with UNICEF global policies and priorities.

12. The goal of the new country programme is to contribute to efforts of the Government and other key duty bearers to address the major threats to children's rights, while opening new channels of participation and partnerships. The strategic role of UNICEF will be in advocacy, representing an ethical and moral voice in the pursuit of children's rights, and in technical and financial support to partners, emphasizing accountability.

13. Three strategies, which work synergistically and are closely associated with the child rights approach, will form the operational backbone of the new programme: capacity-building of duty bearers; advocacy, information and communication; and participation. The emphasis on duty bearers and the acknowledged weaknesses in public administration require partnerships to expand well into civil society and involve families and children. The private sector, until now largely absent, will be actively encouraged to participate.

14. Capacity-building will focus on both technical skills development and coordination among partners operating at household, community, commune, district and national levels. It is hoped that family and community members, once aware of their rights, will demand services, which must be available to them. In this approach, improved service delivery is part of capacity-building, and not a separate strategy. Efforts will be made in the area of advocacy, with a view to gaining acceptance of new ideas and prompting duty bearers to act. Through participation, people will exercise and claim their rights. In addition, three operational strategies are proposed: (a) expansion and consolidation of balanced alliances between government, civil society and the private sector; (b) capacity-building in the field of data collection, monitoring, evaluation, research and reporting on human rights compliance; and (c) use of pilot projects that can be taken to scale.

15. The new country programme comprises five programmes, all of which include the life cycle approach, as well components on HIV/AIDS, gender and disaster prevention, preparedness and response. Although health sector interventions, especially in mother-to-child transmission, are urgent, they are not sufficient to fight the multifaceted HIV/AIDS epidemic. Therefore, HIV/AIDS will be central to all life cycle interventions. Gender mainstreaming will support sensitization and capacity-building, as well as targeted programming where discrimination has deprived girls and women of equal rights. Disaster and emergency components will emphasize preparedness planning, emergency assessment and coordination, accelerated assistance to partners for priority areas for children, and monitoring the situation of children.

16. The health and nutrition programme, addressing the 0-6-year age group, will include breastfeeding promotion, immunization, improved feeding practices, micronutrients (especially elimination of iodine deficiency) and the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness initiative. Adolescents and youth will be targeted in preventive and reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS prevention and control. Information provision and primary health care services will target antenatal care, maternal health and safe motherhood.

17. Through the *basic education and early childhood care and development (ECCD) programme*, the 0-6-year age group will benefit from increased care and stimulation, with an emphasis on low-cost models to serve the poor and community-managed initiatives. Actions for 7-12-year-olds focus on creating child-friendly schools, with an emphasis on improved quality, girl student retention and access to child/adolescent-friendly health services. HIV/AIDS will be central to curriculum development and teacher training.

18. *Child protection programme* activities cover 0-18-year-olds, targeting street children, child servants, orphans, minors in prison, those infected by, or vulnerable to, HIV/AIDS, victims of natural disasters, and all those unregistered at birth. Activities will include legislative reform, institutional strengthening, birth registration, access to health and educational services, promotion of a rights culture, and social integration of those suffering exclusion, exploitation, violence and abuse.

19. The *capacity-building, monitoring and evaluation programme* will include child rights-based indicators, research and reporting, in order to have a basis to hold duty bearers accountable for their obligations to children. It will focus on strengthening institutional capacity in planning, management, monitoring and evaluation, as well as the capacity of families and communities, to respect and protect rights.

20. The *advocacy, information, communication and participation programme* will seek to motivate behavioural change and mobilize civil society partners and government for rights fulfilment. A key activity will be the expansion of "spaces" within which adolescents, the poor and marginalized can participate in dialogues and learn how they can act to protect their rights.

21. Cross-sectoral costs reflect expenses attributable to the entire programme, such as for operations staff and travel.

Estimated programme budget

Estimated programme cooperation, 2002-2006*

(In thousands of United States dollars)

	Regular resources	*Other resources*	*Total*
Health and nutrition	2 262	6 000	8 262
Basic education and ECCD	1 500	5 000	6 500
Child protection	1 000	3 000	4 000
Capacity-building, monitoring and evaluation	900	500	1 400
Advocacy, information, communication and participation	1 500	3 000	4 500
Cross-sectoral costs	2 700		2 700
Total	**9 862**	**17 500**	**27 362**

* These are indicative figures only which are subject to change once aggregate financial data are finalized.

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Country note**

Honduras

Summary

The Executive Director presents the country note for Honduras for a programme of cooperation for the period 2002-2006.

The situation of children and women

1. The population of Honduras, estimated at 5.9 million in 1999, has an annual growth rate of 2.8 per cent. Of the total population, 50.1 per cent are children under 18 years of age. Despite growth in gross national product (GNP) between 1990 and 1998 of 3.4 per cent, the economy is still characterized by structural vulnerabilities in the traditional agricultural and informal sectors, and by high fluctuations in international prices of the main export products (coffee and bananas).

2. Real income increased by 8.9 per cent between 1997 and 1998, but the impact of Hurricane Mitch — hitting Honduras in October 1998 — caused a drop of 10.1 per cent between 1998 and 1999. It has been estimated that Mitch affected 80 per cent of the population and increased poverty from 63.1 per cent to 65.9 per cent between 1998 and 1999, affecting women more than men. Foreign debt, estimated at $4.05 billion in 2000, with a debt/GNP ratio of 69 per cent, is a heavy burden for the economy. GNP per capita was only $760 for 1999, and the country is classified among the Highly Indebted Poor Countries.

* E/ICEF/2001/2.

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3. Honduras has undergone important changes in the last two decades in the area of democratization. The creation of the post of National Human Rights Commissioner and of the Interior Ministry represents major advancement aimed at consolidating the rule of law. Conversely, progress has yet to be made in strengthening the autonomy of the judiciary and in consolidating the decentralization process.

4. Honduras has achieved 13 of the 27 goals of the World Summit for Children. Important progress is being made in the achievement of the remaining 14 goals, although intensified efforts will be required to reach universal coverage in education and water and sanitation. Between 1990 and 1997, the infant mortality rate decreased from 50 to 42 per 1,000 live births, and under-five mortality diminished from 65 to 53 per 1,000 live births. The high immunization coverage rate (more than 90 per cent for all vaccines) has significantly reduced the incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases. The gradual improvement of food fortification (currently at 80 per cent for iodization of salt, Vitamin A fortification of sugar, and iron fortification of flour) has contributed to a partial control of micronutrient deficiencies. However, acute respiratory infections, diarrhoeal diseases and problems during the peri-natal stage constitute the main causes of infant mortality, and are related to poor living conditions and inadequate basic services delivery, e.g., reduced access to safe water (77 per cent nationally and 63 per cent in rural areas) and to sanitation (74 per cent nationally and 57 per cent in rural areas). Chronic malnutrition, which affects 41 per cent of school children between the ages of 6 and 9, has not changed in the last decade.

5. Formal and non-formal pre-school coverage is at 35 per cent, while net primary education coverage is 86 per cent. Repetition and drop-out rates are a concern, with major problems during the first three grades of primary school. In 1999, the primary repetition rate averaged 7.2 per cent, with first grade repetition at 18.5 per cent. Finally, Hurricane Mitch seriously affected the school infrastructure nationwide and caused temporary lack of access and overcrowding.

6. The situation of child and adolescent labour has also worsened since Hurricane Mitch. The 10- to 18-year age group represents 16 per cent of the economically active population; 27 per cent are girls and 65 per cent live in rural areas. During the 1990-1998 period, the number of adolescent workers doubled, from 90,000 to 180,000, in the category of independent worker, while the participation of adolescent workers in the category "domestic help" increased fivefold, from 20,000 to 100,000, over the same period. Limited secondary school access and enrolment, calculated for the 1995-1997 period at 29 per cent for males and 37 per cent for females, is a major factor leading to increased adolescent labour.

7. HIV/AIDS is a serious problem in Honduras. Since 1989, a total of 15,000 cases have been reported. According to the Ministry of Health, transmission is mainly heterosexual, and children, adolescents and adults are affected, with women representing 40 per cent of cases. There are 1,138 registered cases of HIV/AIDS among those under 19 year of age, and of this total, 50 per cent are children under the age of 4. The pandemic is a problem that threatens the entire Honduran population, regardless of age.

8. One of the great changes in the labour force has been the increased absorption of women into the labour market. In the area of women's rights, significant advances were made in the second half of the 1990s with the creation of the National Institute

for Women, the approval of the Law against Domestic Violence, and the enactment of the Law for Equal Opportunities.

Lessons learned from past cooperation

9. The mid-term review of the country programme revealed that: (a) although children's issues are a priority in local government plans, in line with commitments made by mayors within the Municipal Pact for Children, additional efforts are required at the municipal level for disaster prevention and preparedness; (b) community participation has been effective and successful in empowering communities to become the main actors of change; and (c) reduced integration and coordination between programmes and between United Nations agencies led to duplication of efforts and dispersal of resources. The achievement of project objectives and improved use of existing resources require broader institutional links between UNICEF and implementing institutions, which is being addressed in the present programming process.

10. Mobilizing municipal governments and communities in support of children's rights was essential to initiate, expand and strengthen the decentralization process in favour of improved child-related services. A continuation of this municipal capacity-building initiative is necessary to guarantee the best resource utilization and to strengthen coordination among partners.

11. Effective and timely responses to Hurricane Mitch in providing water, food, blankets, essential medicine and psychosocial relief proved to be crucial to meet the basic needs of the population, particularly children and women. Close coordination with government information systems; and the establishment of relevant, rapid and accurate information and communication systems among UNICEF country, regional and headquarters offices and National Committees proved to be critical to define responsibilities, mobilize funds and ensure the logistical organization of relief efforts.

12. Another important lesson pertaining to emergencies is the comparative advantages derived from the favourable image and wide recognition of UNICEF. The organization can play an important role in leading coordinated efforts in favour of children, with a view to preventing the duplication of interventions and dispersal of resources, in order to increase the impact of assistance to those affected by emergencies, and to ensure the inclusion of a component of emergency preparedness and early response in development plans.

Proposed country programme strategy

13. The overall goal of the proposed country programme is to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of children, adolescents and women, in terms of their survival, development, protection and participation. Ensuring the effective promotion and fulfilment of rights is critical to this effort and will be emphasized. The programme strategy and goals are based on a participatory process involving the Government and civil society organizations. Both will respond to and support the National Poverty Reduction Strategy, to which the Government and civil society are committed, with international cooperation agency support.

14. The programme of cooperation will be guided by the adoption of a child rights-based perspective and the life cycle approach, and will be reinforced through: (a) initiatives linked to the demand for and promotion and guarantee of human rights; (b) actions for promoting and supporting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and (c) the involvement of civil society. A concerted effort will be made to increase the linkages between the different programmes, concentrating efforts in priority rural and urban areas. In addition, collaboration will be strengthened between UNICEF and other United Nations organizations, donor agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOS) — those working for children, adolescents and women — enabling a synergy in policy and programme activities.

15. The main country programme strategies include: advocacy to increase political will and financial resources to sustain past achievements and to advance towards full attainment of commitments of the World Summit and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; social mobilization and communication to create public demand and participation, at all levels, but with special emphasis on municipal-level actions as part of the Municipal Pact for Children and with families; capacity-building to strengthen decentralization processes and local/municipal involvement in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of child- and adolescent-targeted interventions (including government and NGO counterparts); and development and dissemination of inclusive and sustainable service delivery models — developed at local levels and projected for national implementation — to reach and respond to the most excluded children.

16. The cooperation programme will include two main programme areas, combining crosscutting strategies of a national scope, with specific decentralized sectoral interventions aimed at achieving the commitments of the World Summit and the Global Movement for Children.

17. Through the cross-cutting *child rights promotion, public policy and social protection programme*, objectives will be targeted to: (a) incorporating the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the adoption of laws, design of policies, and allocation of government budgets; (b) disseminating information and mobilizing civil society in support of new social ethics and practices that consider the well-being of children as a right and create public demand and effective participation; (c) strengthening national and decentralized information systems to monitor child rights compliance and target mobilization and intervention actions for the most excluded children; and (d) planning, monitoring and evaluating — together with counterparts — the development and implementation of UNICEF-supported initiatives and other government programmes related to the commitments of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Programme initiatives will focus on achieving national impact, utilizing and building on municipal-level experiences in priority regions.

18. The *child rights compliance programme*, focusing on strengthened decentralization and integration of sectoral interventions at the municipal level, will — together with government and NGO counterparts — concentrate on the achieving the following in targeted areas (municipalities): (a) reduction of infant and under-five mortality; (b) expansion of early childhood care and development programmes, with an emphasis on parent involvement and empowerment, prevention of child abuse and abandonment, and elimination of developmental risks

and delays; (c) expansion of pre-school education and adequate strategies to facilitate transition to first grade; (d) improvement of the quality of education and inclusion of the excluded, especially in the first three grades; (e) reduction of child labour and protection of working adolescents (those legally able to work); (f) establishment of legislation to protect adolescents in conflict with the law; (g) prevention of and protection against HIV/AIDS, with the main focus on children, adolescents and women; (h) reduction of maternal mortality; and (i) establishment of legal mechanisms for the defence of women's rights. Specific emphasis will be given to strengthening family involvement and capacity in all aspects related to programme priorities.

19. The strategy and priority areas of the programme of cooperation are based on the Common Country Assessment (CCA), and will adhere closely to the priorities of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) currently being prepared, ensuring consistency with the overall assistance strategy and with initiatives carried out by other United Nations agencies. With an increased presence of development cooperation partners in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch, efforts will continue to ensure a complementary role and synergy in areas of common concern affecting women and children. Partnerships with bilateral and multilateral agencies established in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch will be strengthened, while coordination with major international NGOs will be expanded.

Estimated programme budget

Estimated programme of cooperation, 2002-2006[a]

(In thousands of United States dollars)

	Regular resources	*Other resources*	*Total*
Child rights promotion, public policy and social protection	1 456	2 500	3 956
Child rights compliance	2 184	3 750	5 934
Cross-sectoral costs	620	0	620
Total	**4 260**	**6 250**	**10 510**

[a] These are indicative figures only which are subject to change once aggregate financial data are finalized.